

**Economic and Social Council**Distr.: General  
3 May 2011

Original: English

---

**Substantive session of 2011**

Geneva, 4-29 July 2011

Item 2 (b) of the provisional agenda\*

**High-level segment: annual ministerial review****Letter dated 2 May 2011 from the Permanent Representative of  
Mauritius to the United Nations addressed to the President of the  
Economic and Social Council**

Attached herewith is the national report of the Republic of Mauritius on progress towards the achievement of the internationally agreed goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, for the annual ministerial review to be held during the high-level segment of the substantive session of 2011 of the Economic and Social Council (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would circulate the present letter and its annex as a document of the Council, under item 2 (b) of the provisional agenda.

*(Signed)* Milan J. N. Meetarbhan  
Ambassador  
Permanent Representative

---

\* E/2011/100.

**Annex to the letter dated 2 May 2011 from the Permanent  
Representative of Mauritius to the United Nations addressed to the  
President of the Economic and Social Council**

**Voluntary national presentation of Mauritius**

## Contents

	<i>Page</i>
Summary .....	4
<i>Part A</i>	
I. Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to education: introduction .....	6
Brief history of Mauritius .....	6
II. Major policy interventions instrumental in helping advance progress on the Development Goals .....	6
A. Economic development .....	7
B. Social development .....	8
C. Labour market .....	9
D. Role played by various stakeholders in developing policies and lessons learned .....	11
III. Sector challenges and strategies to overcome them .....	12
A. Continuous improvement of competitiveness within the global economy through enhancement of a creative, skilled and competent human resource base .....	12
B. Reducing inequality and exclusion through effective socio-economic integration while maintaining the welfare State .....	14
C. Promoting sustainable development through the use of renewable energy while reducing dependency on fossil fuels .....	15
D. Assistance of international development cooperation in addressing the challenges .....	16
E. Promotion of policy coherence among various sectors that directly or indirectly impact development .....	17
<i>Part B</i>	
IV. Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to education: education sector .....	17
A. Basic facts about education .....	18
B. Challenges in the system .....	19
C. Education and Human Resource Strategy Plan 2008-2020 .....	20
V. Innovations in the education sector .....	21
Pro-poor policies: policies and support measures pertaining to equity and quality issues .....	21
VI. Issue of gender disparity in primary and secondary education .....	24
VII. Other Education for All goals .....	25
VIII. Conclusion .....	26

## *Summary*

Mauritius development policies are anchored in the country's vision of a future that is prosperous for all, promoted by an inclusive society where there is a myriad of opportunities and equality of treatment. Achievement of this vision is centred on the mission of putting people first to ensure inclusive development.

Over the years, the country has faced external economic shocks entwined with domestic economic issues like slow economic growth, rising unemployment, a high-budget deficit and an excessive public debt. With a view to securing the country's survival, especially in a highly competitive, open and globalized economy, the Government has embarked on a 10-year economic reform programme structured around four main pillars, namely, fiscal consolidation and public sector efficiency, improving trade competitiveness, improving the investment climate and democratizing the economy through participation, social inclusion and sustainability.

In this regard, strategies have been crafted and the main economic sectors have been consolidated while development of new sectors is pursued relentlessly. In the same vein, Mauritius has one of the most generous welfare systems in Africa. It provides free health care and free education, among other services. In the field of education, Mauritius is well on its way to attain its target with regard to the Millennium Development Goals. Many countries in Africa look to Mauritius, the region's strongest performer on "doing business indicators", as a source of good practices for reform. Mauritius is well ranked at the 72nd position on the Human Development Index while it is pitched at the 45th position on the Human Poverty Index.

Like in most countries, patterns of employment in Mauritius have also been changing. This is mainly due to the significant structural shift in the Mauritian economy over the past decades, with an economy previously dominated by agriculture and manufacturing being overtaken by a burgeoning service-based one. The shift to a service economy and the resultant growth of opportunities in this work is not unproblematic.

Consequently, in the absence of natural resources and amid fierce global competition, Mauritius faces the challenge of sustaining its socio-economic growth in an eco-friendly environment. To this end, Mauritius is challenged to continuously improve its competitiveness within the global economy by enhancing its creative, skilled and competent human resource base, among other measures. Mauritius also has to reduce inequality and exclusion through effective socio-economic integration while maintaining and strengthening the welfare State. There is an urgent need to pursue sustainable development through the use of renewable energy while reducing dependency on fossil fuels and providing water to all throughout the year.

The country is also sensitive to the plight of the poor and is committed to eradicate absolute poverty. Explicit policy interventions focus on empowering the poor as a sustainable means of breaking the cycle of poverty.

While external assistance is beneficial for facing the future with confidence, such support must be aligned with national challenges and ownership, and donors must adopt a joint programming modality, coordinated interventions and aid harmonization following priority areas identified by the country. Policy coherence needs to be promoted at different levels, namely, within development cooperation,

between the aid and non-aid policies of donor countries/agencies and between donors and recipients. Too much is at stake for anything else.

It is also in line with the standard agenda enunciated by the Education for All goals and the Millennium Development Goals to which Mauritius subscribes, that the transformations in the education system have to be understood.

Education has always held a place of choice in the country's national development strategy. Education policies focus on the major pillars of increasing access, improving quality and broadening equity. The changes witnessed since independence in 1968 and that are backed by heavy investment in education have resulted in high enrolment rates from the pre-primary to secondary levels, with the national literacy rate standing at about 85 per cent in 2011.

Understandably, there are challenges in respect of achieving the goal of quality education for all. A cohort analysis demonstrates that out of the 100 children entering grade 1, only 27 successfully complete the 13-year school cycle, thereby indicating that there is a dropout rate, and subsequent wastage in the system. In addition to this internal inefficiency, the system, especially at the primary level, is plagued by rote learning, teaching based on tests and private tuition.

The Education and Human Resource Strategy Plan 2008-2020, the result of a consensual debate on the system, has highlighted eight broad objectives ranging from pre-primary to sector management. Implementation of the Plan has resulted in such groundbreaking actions as the introduction of innovative pedagogical practices, the review of the curricula of all education subsectors for increased relevance, the widening of access to upper secondary education and the holistic development of learners. A digital revolution has also been triggered in a bid to transform traditional forms of classroom transactions and teaching-learning processes.

The notions of quality and equity are equally central to the provision of education. Pro-poor policies have resulted in the implementation of inclusive measures. Programmes that take children with special education needs on board and those coming from underprivileged areas and pockets of poverty have been spearheaded in close collaboration with community-based organizations and other stakeholders. As Mauritius positions itself as an early childhood development hub for the region, an institutional and regulatory framework for the provision of early childhood care and education has been put in place to ensure school readiness for children and children readiness for school.

As indicated above, the efforts are concerted ones. There have been ongoing efforts to address the education of boys and girls on equal footing. If there is no gender disparity in enrolment, as evidenced by a gender parity index of 1.0 at the primary level and 1.1 at secondary, new areas of gender disparity have emerged. Over the past few years, the performance of boys has been observed to be lagging behind that of girls at all levels in education.

On the other hand, in a bid to support life-skills programmes, basic and continuing education and literacy programmes dispensed through non-formal institutions, other measures have been introduced so as to provide a second chance to those who have fallen out of the educational system at a young age. The challenge is thus to ensure that all citizens find ways and means of securing a sustainable livelihood.

## **Part A**

### **I. Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in relation to education**

#### **Brief history of Mauritius**

1. Mauritius is an island nation located in the south-west of the Indian Ocean. It is part of the Mascarene Islands with the French island of Réunion to the south-west and the island of Rodrigues to the north-east. In addition to the island of Mauritius, the Republic of Mauritius includes the islands of St. Brandon, Rodrigues and the Agalega Islands. Mauritius attained independence on 12 March 1968 and became a Republic within the Commonwealth in 1992. The population of the Republic of Mauritius was estimated at 1,283,415 as at 31 December 2010.

2. The Mauritian society is the result of successive waves of immigration from different countries. The official language is English, though French and Mauritian kreol are commonly used. The journey from a pre-independence society plagued with problems with a bleak future as predicted by Meade<sup>1</sup> to the current economically vibrant and peaceful society has not been an easy one for Mauritius which is far from its main industrial markets and devoid of natural mineral resources. Today, Mauritius has a per capita income of more than \$7,500, the second highest in Africa, as compared with \$260 at the time of its independence. In 1981, gross domestic product (GDP) per capita measured in 2005 constant international \$ purchasing power parity<sup>2</sup> was 38 per cent below the world average. By 2009, it had risen to 16 per cent above the average. Over that period, GDP per capita in Mauritius more than tripled in real terms with growth rates that consistently outperformed world and middle income countries average growth. This represents a cumulative growth rate comparable to the ones observed in Singapore, Hong Kong, China, or Taiwan Province of China.

### **II. Major policy interventions instrumental in helping advance progress on the Millennium Development Goals**

3. Mauritius development policies are anchored in the country's vision of a future that is prosperous for all, an inclusive society where there are opportunities for all and where there is equality of treatment before the law. Achievement of this vision is centred on the mission of putting people first to ensure inclusive development.

---

<sup>1</sup> The most cited reference used to illustrate this point is the report prepared by the Economics Nobel prize winner Jean Edward Meade in 1961. Meade argued that the output for peaceful development in Mauritius was poor due to heavy population pressure and potential for ethnic-based political conflict.

<sup>2</sup> A purchasing power parity between two countries, A and B, is the ratio of the number of units of country A's currency needed to purchase in country A the same quantity of a specific good or service as one unit of country B's currency will purchase in country B. Purchasing power parities can be expressed in the currency of either of the countries. In practice, they are usually computed among large numbers of countries and expressed in terms of a single currency, with the United States dollar most commonly used as the base or "numeraire" currency.

## A. Economic development

4. In 2006, the country reached the end of an economic cycle, one which was based on trade preferences and which had to a large extent contributed to its past success in the “miracle years”.<sup>3</sup> The country faced other external shocks, such as rising sugar prices and soaring oil prices. On the domestic front, economic growth had slowed, unemployment was at its highest level, with a mismatch of skills preventing the expansion of several sectors, a very high budget deficit and an excessive public debt. During the period 1999-2009, the gross domestic product (GDP) in real terms grew by an annual average of 4.7 per cent. In the same period, GDP per capita grew by 3.3 per cent. By 2010, two other shocks, the financial crisis and the euro crisis added to the list.

### Challenges

5. If pairs of hands were sufficient to make Mauritius a politically and economically stable country in the 1970s and 1980s, current economic growth can only be sustained by pairs of “thinking hands”. During the current decade, the speed at which information flows is increasing day by day, and the geographical barriers to economic activity are breaking down. Thus, the boundary between what can be and what cannot be traded is being rapidly eroded. New technology and trade are opening up avenues for global markets, while changing global patterns of production leave no choice to the country but to consider other avenues to remain competitive in the global world.

### Policy intervention

6. In order to secure the country’s survival in a highly competitive, open and globalized economy, the Government has embarked since 2005 on a 10-year economic reform programme structured around four main pillars, namely:

- (a) Fiscal consolidation and public sector efficiency;
- (b) Improving trade competitiveness;
- (c) Improving the investment climate;
- (d) Democratizing the economy through participation, social inclusion and sustainability.

### Strategies

7. The strategies are as follows:

- The agriculture sector is being revitalized to emerge as an economic pillar. There is greater orientation towards more modern production of high value-added primary and agro-based products.
- The sugar sector is being transformed into a cane sector. The use of bagasse for electricity generation and molasses for production of ethanol and value-added spirits is being promoted.

<sup>3</sup> The term “Mauritian miracle” was used by external observers to describe the rapid economic growth that the country experienced in the late 1980s.

- In the manufacturing sector, the focus is on the utilization of high technology and production of higher value-added products. For instance, increasing emphasis is being laid on the production of high-quality garments. Export processing zones and non-export processing zone subsectors have been integrated to provide level playing field for small- and medium-sized enterprises.
- The services subsectors are being developed so that they play a pivotal role in the economic growth of the country.
- Tourism efforts focus on enhancing the attractiveness of the island as a destination for nature and eco-tourism; culture, entertainment and the arts; meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibitions; international sporting events; health-tourism; and shopping and recreational activities.
- The financial services sector is being strengthened in order to position the island as the financial hub for the region.
- The information technology enabled services, business process outsourcing and knowledge process outsourcing sectors are being developed into a vibrant information and communications technology (ICT) hub, leveraging on its prime location, very good network and the bilingualism/multilingualism of the local population.
- The small- and medium-sized enterprises sector has been brought to the forefront of economic development by flattening the playing field and through direct support at every level of operations, such as technical assistance, capacity-building and improving their access to global markets.

During the period 1999 to 2009, GDP in real terms grew by an annual average of 4.7 per cent.

## **B. Social development**

8. The social development of the country has been a direct offshoot of the different policy interventions that have led to a transformation in the way Mauritian society has evolved.

### **Policy interventions**

9. Mauritius has maintained a strong welfare State, in fact, one of the most generous welfare systems in Africa. It provides free health care. It is worth noting that since 2005, the budget for health care has increased by 85 per cent to reach more than Rs7.4 billion in 2010.

### **Strategies**

10. In the field of education, Mauritius is well on its way to attaining its target with regard to the Millennium Development Goals. Education is free at pre-primary, primary, secondary and up to the full-time undergraduate level at the University of Mauritius. The Government has invested heavily in new school infrastructure for both boys and girls. Education is compulsory until the age of 16. Books are free for students at the primary level, and those attending pre-primary education, beginning at age 4, are granted Rs200 per child per month, favouring greater access, equity

and fairness in education. Transport is free to all children attending school, including those attending full-time university courses as well as pensioners, and non-contributory old age pension is given to all citizens. Orphans, widows and a large majority of those requiring special needs also receive a non-contributory monthly pension. Children whose parents are recipients of social aid receive a financial allowance.

11. The Government expenditure on social security and welfare showed an increase of around 63.4 per cent, in the periods from 2003/2004 to 2008/2009.

## **C. Labour market**

12. As in most countries, patterns of employment in Mauritius have also been changing. This is mainly due to the significant structural shift in the Mauritian economy over the past decades, with an economy that was dominated by agriculture and manufacturing being overtaken by a burgeoning service-based one. The Mauritian labour force grew from 510,000 in 2001 to 566,000 in 2009. During the same period the foreign labour force increased from 16,000 to 21,000.

### **Challenges**

13. However, the shift to a service economy and the resultant growth of opportunities in this work has not been without problems.

14. The situation has worsened with the erosion of trade preferences. Traditional sectors, such as manufacturing and agriculture, have been continuously shedding labour, while emerging sectors, such as information technology enabled services-business process outsourcing, financial intermediation, real estate, construction, non-sugar cane agriculture and non-textile manufacturing, have created job opportunities. Throughout the years, Mauritius has left no stone unturned in order to ensure that during the process of job churning, a significant number of jobs is being created. Mauritian and foreign labour forces as well as total employment have been increasing.

15. Without the financial crisis, trends would have most likely continued to result in an outstanding performance in terms of generating enough employment to cover labour force growth. At the same time, the overall unemployment rate fell from 9.5 per cent in 2005 to 7.2 per cent in 2008. This positive performance has been mainly explained by the decline in female unemployment rates. The global crisis impeded the growth in employment in 2009 since it severely affected large establishments. The number of unemployed males increased in 2009, while number of unemployed female remained constant. Nonetheless, total employment still displayed positive growth during the crisis. Interestingly, this result was entirely driven by female employment.

### **Policy interventions**

16. The Workfare Programme has been introduced in order to sustain levels of employment and to improve the quality of services and industry. Under the Employment Rights Act 2008, the Government grants a transition unemployment benefit to every worker whose agreement has been terminated and who has joined

the Workfare Programme, which will be paid for a minimum period of one month and a maximum period of 12 months.

17. A National Employment Policy for Mauritius is also being developed. It provides an active policy framework for achieving the goal of productive employment and decent work for all as well as meeting the employment challenge through well-targeted policies and programmes, while stimulating economic growth and development, meeting manpower requirements, reducing the mismatch of skills, promoting equal pay for equal work and minimizing unemployment and underemployment.

### Strategies

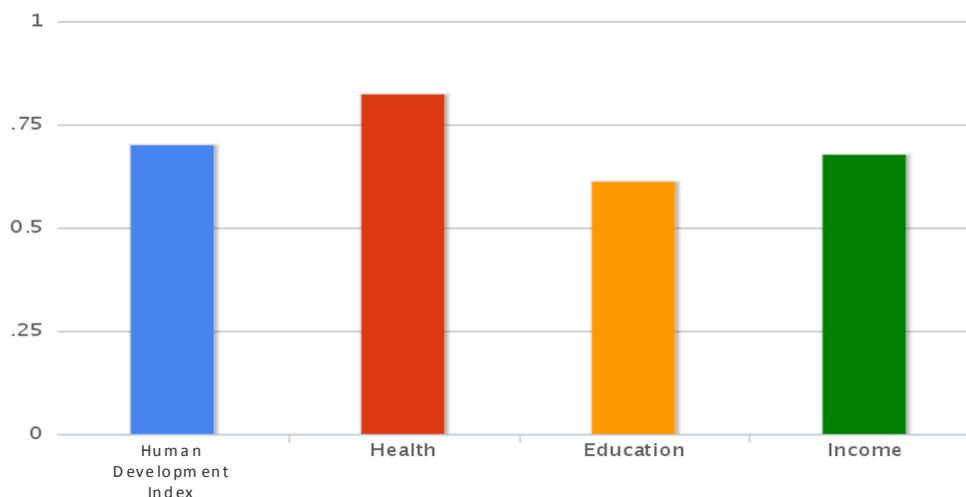
18. Mauritius has developed various programmes, such as a placement for training programme, in order to allow new entrants into the labour market to acquire relevant skills and to allow others to retrain themselves. Through the National Empowerment Foundation, the Government also provides necessary incentives to start a small business. New sectors, like the Land-based Oceanic Industry, which have significant potential for job creation, are being developed.

### Mauritius on the global landscape

19. The Human Development Index for Mauritius, between 1980 and 2010, rose by 1.0 per cent annually, from 0.525 to 0.701 in 2010, which gives Mauritius a rank of 72 out of 169 countries with comparable data (see figure I).

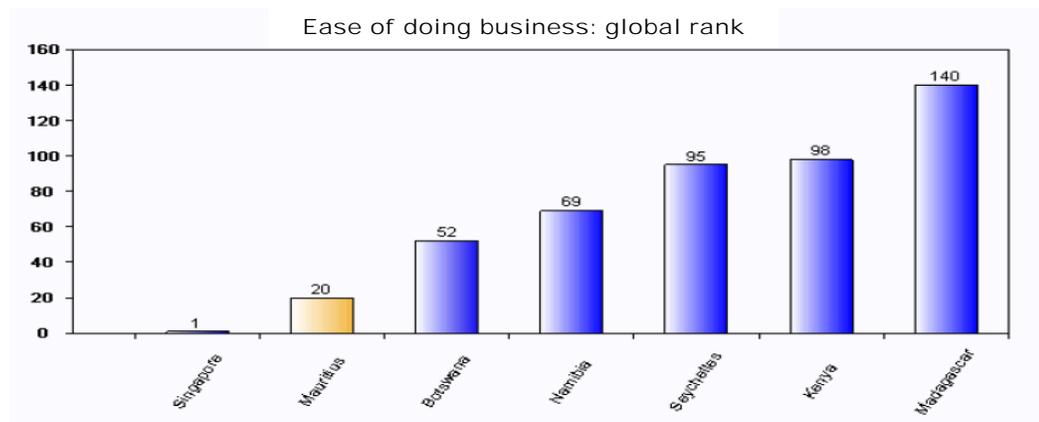
Figure I

#### Human Development Index for Mauritius in 2010



20. The Human Poverty Index (which represents a multidimensional alternative to the \$1.25-a-day (purchasing power parity United States \$) poverty measure) was 9.5 per cent in 2007. Mauritius was ranked 45 out of 135 countries.

Figure II  
Ease of doing business



21. Mauritius is ranked 20 (first in the African region) out of 183 economies in the *Doing Business 2011* report published by the World Bank. Many countries in Africa look to Mauritius, the region's strongest performer on "Doing Business indicators", as a source of good practices for reform (see figure II).

22. According to *The Global Competitiveness Report 2007-2008*, Mauritius was ranked 60th. This index improved to be pitched at the 55th position in the report published by the World Economic Forum for the year 2010-2011. Mauritius was ranked 73rd in the *Global Innovation Index 2009-2010* overall rankings, with a Global Innovation Index score of 2.93. According to figures compiled by the International Telecommunication Union in the most recent *ICT Development Index* for 2010, Mauritius ranked 2nd in the African region.

#### D. Role played by various stakeholders in developing policies and lessons learned

23. The institutions involved in policymaking are closely linked with the individual policy stakeholders. Various parts of the Government clearly play key roles in formal policymaking that has increasingly included the participation of a wider range of stakeholders outside of Government. Non-governmental stakeholders participate through advocacy, representation in Government bodies, consultation and policy dialogue with policymakers and on coordination mechanisms. The support of a vibrant private sector also contributes immensely.

24. Policy champions and strong leadership committed to promoting a policy issue are important advocates for policy development and reform. Policy champions can come from any stakeholder group; what is important is that they have access to key decision makers. It is important to develop a continuum of participation in order to obtain buy-in from all direct or indirect stakeholders. This participatory approach renders policy implementation smooth.

### III. Sector challenges and strategies to overcome them

25. In the absence of natural resources, and amid fierce global competition, Mauritius faces the challenge of sustaining its socio-economic growth in an eco-friendly environment. To this end, Mauritius is challenged to:

(a) Continuously improve its competitiveness within the global economy by enhancing its creative, skilled and competent human resource base;

(b) Reduce inequality and exclusion through effective socio-economic integration while maintaining the welfare State;

(c) Promote sustainable development through the use of renewable energy while reducing dependency on fossil fuels.

#### A. Continuous improvement of competitiveness within the global economy through enhancement of a creative, skilled and competent human resource base

26. Prosperity and fairness in the new global economy can be achieved only if world class skills are achieved. Without world class skills, businesses will find it increasingly difficult to compete and innovate. Thus, the success of the developments in the various sectors in Mauritius relies mainly on the availability of skilled labour in the required numbers. Inadequate labour supply could lead to an appreciable slowdown in growth. The delocalization of textile and garment factories from Mauritius to other parts of the world, where the wages are lower, shows that economic activities are increasingly located according to comparative advantage.

27. In the World Economic Forum publication *The Global Competitiveness Report 2010-2011*, Mauritius is ranked 55th in terms of global competitiveness. This rank is up two places since the previous year, and directly follows South Africa. The table below shows the ranks attributed to Mauritius by the World Economic Forum. Overall Mauritius is ranked 82nd in terms of its capacity to innovate, with a score of only 3 out of 7. Nonetheless, it is a fact that, in terms of availability of scientists and engineers, Mauritius is lagging behind since it ranks 112th out of 139 in the world.

Table

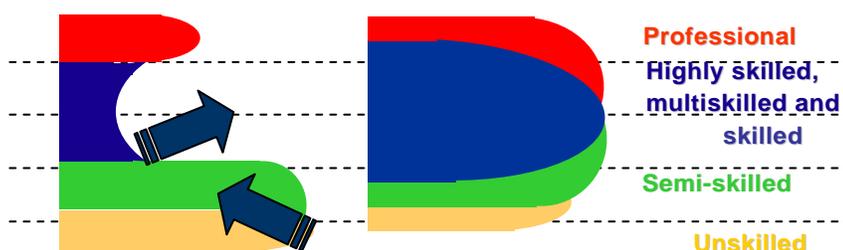
**Ranking of Mauritius (*The Global Competitiveness Report 2010-2011*)**

	<i>Rank (out of 139 countries)</i>	<i>Score (1-7)</i>
Innovation	82	3.0
Capacity for innovation	76	
Quality for scientific research institutions	86	
Company spending on research and development	64	
University-industry collaboration in research and development	94	
Government procurement of advanced technology products	67	
Availability of scientists and engineers	112	
Utility patents per million population	90	

28. In order to move to a higher plane of development, Mauritius needs a competent and skilled labour force. The present scenario, as shown in figure III, demonstrates that it is perpetuating at the lower levels since its labour force consists of a majority of semi-skilled and unskilled employees, with few professionals and highly skilled persons. All the efforts should converge to have a labour force as shown in figure IV.

Figure III  
**Trends in skills  
and competencies:  
present scenario**

Figure IV  
**Trends in skills  
and competencies:  
future scenario**



29. Therefore, it is important to promote skills development as well as research and development. The skills available are not adequate to meet the skills in demand. There is a high proportion of mismatch of labour which needs to be corrected if the country wants to follow the appropriate track towards development.

30. Various measures have been initiated by different authorities to bridge the gap of skills supply and skills requirements:

- Placement for Training Programme, mix of work and training
- Circular migration
- Interactive platform for jobseekers and employers (espace des métiers)
- Life Skills Programme
- Special entrepreneurship programme
- Special programme for unemployed women
- Eradication of absolute poverty

These measures are still greatly insufficient in reducing the mismatch significantly. The education sector, especially training centres and universities, have been encouraged to train people in skills according to labour market demand. Institutions such as the Human Resource Development Council have conducted surveys to identify the skills requirements of the country.

31. Skilled workers are more able to adapt quickly and effectively to change. The ability of companies to absorb new technology is linked to a firm's skill composition. The projected strong demand for higher skilled occupations in high-skilled sectors undoubtedly suggests the need for an intensification of human resource supports in high technology areas, but the evidence also signals a parallel need for human resource investment across a wider range of skills. This underlines

the importance of continuous redevelopment of existing education and training policies to cater for the full range of skills needs. Training and retraining programmes should be emphasized for both employers and employees to increase the mobility and adaptability of the nation's workforce towards knowledge-intensive and higher value-added activities.

## **B. Reducing inequality and exclusion through effective socio-economic integration while maintaining the welfare State**

32. The second challenge currently facing the country is reducing inequality and exclusion through effective socio-economic integration while maintaining the welfare State.

33. On the social front, a small proportion of the population is benefiting the least from the economic progress of the past years, and pockets of poverty remain prevalent in specific regions, including Rodrigues. As regards Goal 1 of the Millennium Development Goals, the household budget survey (2006/07) conducted by the Central Statistics Office of Mauritius showed that the proportion of poor households below the relative poverty line (set at the half-median monthly household income per adult equivalent) increased from 7.7 per cent in 2001/02 to 8.0 per cent in 2006/07. Efforts are required to better target and help vulnerable groups, especially women and children.

### **Policy interventions**

34. With the inclusive development paradigm, there is a need to go beyond the established social safety nets and to direct attention to providing jobs and raising the incomes of the poor through explicit policy interventions. In other words, the focus now is on "pro-poor" growth.

### **Strategies**

35. In its endeavour to reduce poverty, the Government of Mauritius launched the Empowerment Programme in 2006, with the following objectives:

- Securing viable employment for the currently unemployed due to industry restructuring
- Encouraging entrepreneurship and improving the capacity and competitiveness of small entrepreneurs, especially in the global market to improve export competitiveness
- Providing transitional support to low-income and vulnerable households for housing
- Enhancing education of the children in the most vulnerable households

36. The Support to Unemployed Women Programme, as part of the Empowerment Programme, aims at widening the circle of opportunities for women and helping them to better exploit these prospects.

37. The Government has also set up the Trust Fund for the Integration of Vulnerable Groups, which had alleviated the plight of some 60,000 vulnerable men, women and children by the end of 2009. The Eradication of Absolute Poverty

Programme has as a subprogramme on integrated community development, which had helped 291 families by the end of 2009. During the same period, another subprogramme of the Eradication of Absolute Poverty, which is a pre-primary school project, had been caring for 511 children from poor families who could not attend classes regularly, with free lunches, transportation, medical examinations, school materials and a programme to ensure that children are in school (“accompagnement scolaire”).

38. By the end of 2009, the Trust Fund for the Integration of Vulnerable Groups had provided emergency assistance to almost 3,000 very poor households to build corrugated iron sheet houses at a cost of some Rs160 million. Families with modest incomes also receive financial aid, under the “casting of slabs” scheme introduced in 1997, to add a concrete roof to their house. On average, 4,000 families benefit from this scheme every year. Flour and cooking gas are subsidized for all in Mauritius.

39. A host of measures have also been taken in the education sector since education plays a crucial role in poverty alleviation and in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. These are more fully addressed in part B of the present report.

40. It is important to note that, in a bid to do away with a fragmented and incoherent approach to the issue of poverty eradication, since 2010 the Government has set up a new ministry, the Ministry of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment that has been invested with the responsibility of acting as an umbrella ministry, thereby coordinating several actions undertaken by both the private and public sectors as well as non-governmental organizations.

41. The State obviously cannot achieve sustainable results on its own. To ensure that the fruits of development are shared by all, the current policy to broaden the circle of opportunities comprises a corporate social responsibility scheme whereby private enterprises contribute a percentage (2 per cent of their book profit) to fund social projects.

42. The principle of equality between men and women is enshrined in the Constitution. Gender equality has been integrated in the national legislation through the Sex Discrimination Act, the Protection from Domestic Violence Act and, most recently, the Equal Opportunities Bill. Institutional mechanisms have been strengthened for more effective service delivery and support to women. A Ministry of Women’s Rights, Child Development and Family Welfare, recently renamed as the Ministry of Gender Equality, is a testimony of the Government’s commitment to place women’s development high on its agenda, as a key route to growth and development. A National Gender Action Plan outlines a series of measures for the empowerment of women. Strategies include gender mainstreaming in national policies and more specifically in the process of poverty reduction and sustainable economic growth to overcome the feminization of poverty and unemployment.

### **C. Promoting sustainable development through the use of renewable energy while reducing dependency on fossil fuels**

43. Mauritius, being an insular country, has limited access to natural resources. Its energy requirement has more than trebled in the past few decades, and this trend is

expected to continue in the years to come. The major preoccupation of the Government for the coming decades will be in terms of energy consumption, water management and sustainable development. The Government, together with other stakeholders, launched the project “Maurice Ile Durable”, and efforts are being pulled together to implement the project.

44. The rising demand in energy and the soaring prices of oil have urged the Government to adopt the strategy of building a green future for Mauritius through the “Maurice Ile Durable” concept, thereby shifting to local renewable sources of energy and away from imported fossil fuel.

45. A “Maurice Ile Durable” fund with wider references aims to step up efforts to protect the environment through recycling, to encourage more efficient use of energy and to increase reliance on renewable energy. The initial results are encouraging.

46. Mauritius climbed to the sixth position in the 2010 Environmental Performance Index from the 58th position in the 2008 rankings. The Index ranks countries on performance indicators covering environmental health, which includes water, air pollution and the environmental burden of disease, and on ecosystem vitality, comprising forestry, fisheries, agriculture, climate change and biodiversity.

47. The challenge for Mauritius is to adapt to the increasingly unpredictable climatic change, the rise in sea level, having a continuous supply of fresh water to all households throughout the year, and to decreasing the use of fossil fuel while achieving a target of 65 per cent autonomy by 2028 through increased utilization of renewable energy and more efficient use of energy.

#### **D. Assistance of international development cooperation in addressing the challenges**

48. Assistance must be aligned with national challenges and ownership. Donors must adopt a joint programming modality, coordinated interventions and aid harmonization following priority areas identified by the country.

49. Currently, in Mauritius there is a well-developed mechanism whereby the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development takes a lead role in coordinating all development assistance. It selects priority projects critical for the Government programme on the basis of a business plan whereby these are matched against fields/domains where the development partners have a comparative advantage. This avoids duplication of activities. Obviously, it presupposes that the country already has formulated its country partnership strategy based on the vision of the country and developed it jointly with development partners.

50. While this is a good practice that has worked, it nevertheless has ramifications for line ministries in tapping the relevant and appropriate technical assistance for implementation of their projects.

51. Illustratively, the European Commission has been an active partner to the country through a general budget support programme, which is linked to the achievement of performance indicators, as elaborated in a results matrix covering such sectors as energy, environment, wastewater, sugar, education and empowerment sectors.

## **E. Promotion of policy coherence among various sectors that directly or indirectly impact development**

52. In an increasingly interdependent world, domestic policy space is subject to global forces and to rules governing international trade and finance. For this reason, policy coherence, especially with respect to trade and finance, is also required at the global level to support project outcomes at the national level.

53. Coherence can be promoted at different levels: within development cooperation, between aid and non-aid policies of one donor country, between donors, and between donors and recipients. According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development definition, policy coherence for development means working to ensure that the objectives and results of a Government's development policies are not undermined by other policies of the Government that have an impact on developing countries, and that these other policies support development objectives, where feasible.

54. As national or international interests compete, fully coherent policies are often not feasible. Development is not the only goal of Government policy, and competing interests, such as employment, safety standards for consumers, environmental quality and moral convictions, carry a lot of weight. In a democracy, these competing interests will lead to compromises; within the compromises, the extent to which some interests override others is a matter of stakeholder power and political position.

## **Part B**

## **IV. Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to education: education sector**

55. Mauritius subscribes to the major education-related conventions and goals as encapsulated in both the Education for All initiative and the Millennium Development Goals. In fact, the economic and social cohesion policies of a multiracial, multilingual and multi-ethnic Mauritius are aligned with the Millennium Development Goals indicators.

56. A well-educated population is essential to a country's economic and social development. Societies therefore have an intrinsic interest in ensuring that children and adults have access to a wide variety of educational opportunities. Mauritius has systematically shown a high level of commitment to the provision of educational opportunities for all, based on the conviction that, if early childhood programmes prepare children for primary education and provide opportunities to enhance and complement their educational experiences at home while helping to combat linguistic and social disadvantages, primary and secondary education for their part lay the foundation for the development of a broad range of competences and prepare young people to become lifelong learners and productive members of society.

## **A. Basic facts about education**

57. In general, Mauritius has achieved or nearly achieved a number of the fundamental Millennium Development Goals. The net enrolment rate in primary education is 96 per cent (2010), with 98 per cent of female and male pupils respectively reaching grade 6, the last year of primary schooling, and with 82 per cent of pupils progressing to secondary schools, while the gross tertiary enrolment rate currently stands at 47 per cent.

58. With education and human capital development recognized as being central to development, the Government of Mauritius has focused on education as one of the priority areas in its national development strategy. Since independence in 1968, several initiatives have been undertaken and heavy investment made in close collaboration with the private sector in providing access to education.

59. Education is not only free but also compulsory for all up to the age of 16 since January 2005; basic education therefore covers 11 years of education. Education has been free through the secondary level since 1977, for full-time undergraduate programmes at the University of Mauritius since 1988, and has been partly subsidized for the second public university, the University of Technology, Mauritius.

### **Literacy rate**

60. Over the 10-year period from 1990 to 2000, the literacy rate increased from 80.8 to 85.0 per cent, the rate being highest among adults aged 55 and over. A higher literacy rate is observed in Rodrigues compared to the mainland. The literacy rate for the age group 15-24 years was 94.5 per cent, as measured by the census of 2000. The higher literacy rate for females for this age group indicates a reversal of the situation that had previously prevailed.

### **Educational attainment**

61. Educational attainment is one of the measures of school outcomes and it is often measured by end-of-cycle examinations at three key stages, namely, the Certificate of Primary Education at the end of primary cycle and the Cambridge School Certificate and Higher School Certificate at the end of secondary cycle. While the upper secondary graduation rate does not guarantee that an education system has adequately equipped its graduates with the basic skills and knowledge necessary to enter the labour market, since this indicator does not capture the quality of educational outcomes, it does provide, however, an indication of the extent to which an education system succeeds in preparing students to meet the minimum requirements of the labour market. On average, the number of years of education measured against the above-mentioned examination system, which regulate the flow of students from one level to the next, is around 10 years.

62. This falls short of the country's goal of providing 11 years of schooling to all.

63. In line with the Millennium Development Goals and the Education for All goals, focus in the paragraphs below will be exclusively on the pre-primary, primary and secondary subsectors, even though a great number of innovations are currently afoot to revamp the higher education subsector in a bid to transform Mauritius into a knowledge hub.

## **B. Challenges in the system**

64. Notwithstanding the very high level of participation of Mauritian children in the schooling process (nearing 100 per cent, with 96 per cent at pre-primary and a survival rate of 98 per cent at primary) and free access at the secondary level as well as total gender parity in enrolment in the system, there are still some serious challenges to be addressed.

### **Dropouts**

65. The yearly rate of dropouts at the primary level is around 0.5 per cent. At the secondary level every year, about 1.5 per cent of students leave the system before reaching the fourth year of secondary schooling. In addition, about 9 per cent of students enrolled in the pre-vocational stream (which caters for the double failures at the Certificate of Primary Education) do not complete the third year of pre-vocational education. These children enter adolescence ill-prepared for work, further schooling and the practicalities of coping with life.

### **Ensuring successful completion of schooling**

66. The real issue for the country is to ensure that all children successfully complete secondary education. Currently, around 35 per cent of children fail to obtain the Certificate of Primary Education. Of these, about 20 per cent repeat the Certificate, and those having failed it twice or who have reached the age of 13 are enrolled in the three-year pre-vocational stream. A cohort analysis reveals that, out of 100 children entering grade I, only 27 complete the last grade at upper secondary. Thus, the challenge today remains the successful completion of primary and secondary education by all since it is upper secondary education that serves as the foundation for advanced learning and training opportunities as well as preparation for direct entry into the labour market.

### **Rote memorization**

67. An end-of-cycle examination, which serves a dual purpose of certification and selection for secondary schools, has led to a culture of competition that is deeply entrenched. This is reflected in a teaching style that is assessment-oriented, resulting in teaching-to-the-test and rote memorization rather than developing the ability of learners to indulge in some level of critical thinking. It also results in concentration on core examinable subjects, rather than on those areas that would serve the interest of the holistic development of the learner.

### **Private tuition**

68. This parallel form of education has long plagued the system. By focusing on student outcomes (as measured exclusively by quantifiable outcomes, such as pass rates, completion rates, etc.), there is an inherent danger for the current system of examination-centred teaching and learning, school selection and tracking processes, as well as private tuition, to be perpetuated by the system. Private tuition is hence a deep-rooted phenomenon that has to be addressed holistically and in an integrated manner.

## C. Education and Human Resource Strategy Plan 2008-2020

69. All of the above-mentioned issues are fully addressed in the Education and Human Resources Strategy Plan 2008-2020, which constructs the following vision for the sector:

*A quality education for all and a human resource development base to transform Mauritius into an intelligent nation State in the vanguard of global progress and innovation.*

Emphasis is thus placed on the following main pillars of education and training: increasing access; improving quality; broadening equity; and ensuring contextual relevance and higher-order excellence (see box below).

### **Education and Human Resource Strategy Plan 2008-2020**

#### **Education sector objectives**

1. To ensure that all children aged 3 to 5 years in Mauritius have the opportunity to develop their individual intellectual, socio-emotional and psycho-motor skills to the best of their capacity in order to build the confidence and self-esteem in learning that will not only prepare them for the next level (primary school) but, more importantly, lay the foundations for learning that will support them throughout their lifetime.
2. To sustain equitable access to quality education, ensuring that all learners attain high levels of achievement in literacy, numeracy, information and communications technology and such essential life skills as sound human values, healthy lifestyle and so forth as the basis for lifelong learning and good citizenship.
3. To ensure that all students are given the opportunity to embark on and complete higher secondary education for employability and higher and further education and training with the required maturity and confidence.
4. To build a system that ensures a supply of quality personnel that work collegially with a strong management and quality assurance system to improve and support learning achievement and overall development of all learners.
5. To provide an efficient and effective technical and vocational education and training system of greater public esteem responsive to the present and future needs by having a skilled and flexible workforce.
6. To make Mauritius an intelligent island, a knowledge hub to serve the region and a centre for higher learning and excellence.
7. To build a creative and competent human resource base for Mauritius for sustainable national development.
8. To develop the Ministry into an efficient, effective and accountable functioning public institution.

## V. Innovations in the education sector

70. The Ministry has, in line with the Education and Human Resource Strategy Plan 2008-2020, initiated action on a host of innovative measures that act as policy levers in accelerating the educational transformation process. These include but are not restricted to:

- Introduction of innovative pedagogical practices through, inter alia, the Enhancement Programme, continuous assessment and remedial education.
- Review of the curriculums of all education subsectors for increased relevance. While curriculums and syllabi existed, for the first time a curriculum framework has been developed for pre-primary, primary and lower secondary education.
- Widening access to upper secondary education that has been traditionally limited because of restrictive administrative criteria.
- Improvement in educational infrastructure.
- Promotion of the holistic development of the learners through the promotion of co- and extra-curricular activities focusing on a healthy lifestyle, civic education, sustainable development and promotion of arts and of literacy so as to help them develop self-confidence and self-esteem. This has now become an integral part of the official curriculum in secondary schools.
- Triggering of a digital revolution in the education system.
- Introduction of new modes of assessment for benchmarking purposes.
- Re-engineering of the pre-vocational education policy to cover a four-year programme that will provide the right blend of basic literacy, numeracy, vocational and social skills.

### **Pro-poor policies**

#### **Policies and support measures pertaining to equity and quality issues**

71. It is widely recognized today that the issue of access to basic education, including to pre-primary and secondary education, has been universally addressed. All efforts are today oriented towards ensuring greater equity and quality improvement in the system.

72. The prevailing wisdom today suggests that low-quality education renders trainability difficult and restricts the scope for future employment. The move is accordingly towards a new phase in education where the wealth of a nation will be measured by the skills and knowledge of its people, the most important levers to create wealth and reduce social deprivation.

73. Eradication of absolute poverty is high on the national agenda, and vulnerable groups have to be empowered through education, training and skills enhancement.

74. The provision of an inclusive education has today taken the forms set out below.

## **1. Concerns for children with special education needs**

75. Children currently being catered for in special education needs schools/units represent only around 53 per cent of the estimated total population of children with special educational needs and whose needs are not currently being met.

76. In 2006, the Ministry developed a national policy and strategy document for the special education needs sector in order to respond to both the specific and emerging educational needs of all the children concerned. The document lays emphasis on the need to adopt a child-centred pedagogical approach as well as a flexible and adapted curriculum that will help each child to develop his or her full potential.

77. In order to successfully attain the strategic objectives set for the special education needs sector, the following four crucial elements are being worked on today:

- (a) An appropriate curriculum along with an adapted pedagogy;
- (b) An appropriate quality assurance framework to harmonize the level of educational services dispensed by the different stakeholders involved in the sector;
- (c) Capacity-building programmes for trainers and teaching personnel;
- (d) An appropriate regulatory framework to ensure the provision of adapted and quality education services so as to cater to the different types of special needs/disabilities of children aged between 3 and 20 years.

## **2. Provision of quality pre-primary education**

78. The following measures are part of policy developments to address the above-mentioned issue:

- (a) Strengthening the institutional and regulatory framework for the provision of early childhood care and education;
- (b) Reduction of disparity among preschools;
- (c) Addressing the problem of out-of-schools pre-primary children due to absolute poverty;
- (d) Developing a national curriculum framework for the pre-primary subsector;
- (e) Ensuring readiness of all pre-primary schoolchildren for primary school;
- (f) Construction of pre-primary units in disadvantaged areas;
- (g) Strengthening partnerships with parents through a parent empowerment programme.

79. Special efforts have been made to reach out to the 15 per cent of children aged 3 and 4 years, who are not attending school, most of whom came from vulnerable families.

80. Children in families living in poverty are supported through the Empowerment Programme for the Eradication of Absolute Poverty which:

- (a) Ensures that poor children of pre-primary school-going age attend school;
- (b) Provides these children with school materials, a free lunch and free transport;
- (c) Provides parents with a decent job with sustainable income under the training and placement programme;
- (d) Provides life skills mentoring to ensure the proper management of family affairs.

### 3. “Zones d’éducation prioritaires”

81. Primary schools that scored 40 per cent or less at Certificate of Primary Education examinations for five consecutive years have been classified as “Zep” schools. The 30 such schools, including one in Rodrigues and two in Agalega, are in or close to poverty areas with many social problems.

82. Based on the notion of positive reinforcement, the zones d’éducation prioritaires project aims at reducing school and social inequalities by providing equitable opportunities to the schoolchildren as part of affirmative action. It hence aims at mobilizing all the resources within the zones to contribute to raising the standard of achievement of the school.

### 4. Other measures that ensure a level playing field

83. Other measures include:

- (a) Introduction of Kreol Morisien (mother tongue) and Bhojpuri (ancestral language) as optional subjects at school. This is a major novelty, and all modalities pertaining to curriculum development, the production of textbooks and training of teachers are being looked into to ensure the introduction of these languages in primary schools beginning in 2012. This multilingualism will help to cement the cardinal virtue of multiculturalism, especially, the interculturalism that is called upon to be the mainstay of Mauritian society;

- (b) The provision of a subsidy for fees for the Cambridge School Certificate and Higher School Certificate to ensure that students from poor families taking part in those examinations are given every support to complete their cycles of study and that they are not handicapped on grounds of affordability. This measure provides them with further avenues for a smooth transition to post-secondary education;

- (c) The review of the existing laureate scheme (which offers fully funded scholarships for overseas studies to the best candidates at the Higher School Certificate examinations) aims at bringing more equity into the system and providing opportunities to bright students from low-income families who would otherwise have been deprived of a scholarship although they are highly meritorious. This will be phased in next year. In addition, the Human Resource, Knowledge and Arts Development Fund ensures that scholarships are provided for post-secondary and tertiary studies in recognized higher education institutions to underprivileged students. Under the same scheme, bank loans are also guaranteed by the Ministry for those whose families have no assets;

(d) Free transport (including bus facilities in some cases) is provided to all schoolchildren as well as university students;

(e) Textbooks are freely provided to all primary schoolchildren while at the secondary level; the “Books for the Needy” scheme caters to children coming from economically vulnerable groups.

## **VI. Issue of gender disparity in primary and secondary education**

84. The Government’s commitment towards gender equality is expressed in the National Gender Policy Framework, 2008, which strives to fulfil the following vision:

*A society in which all girls and boys, women and men live together in dignity, safety, mutual respect, harmony and social justice; thrive in an enabling environment in which they are able to achieve their full potential, in full enjoyment of their human rights, are equal partners in taking decisions to shape economic, social and cultural development, in determining the values that guide and sustain such development and equally enjoy its benefits.*

85. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2003/04*, gender equality refers to the notion of boys and girls experiencing the same advantages or disadvantages in attending school, receiving teaching methods, curriculums and academic orientation and producing equal learning achievement and subsequent life opportunities.

86. As far as access is concerned, there are no gender gaps or disparities in enrolment at the pre-primary, primary, secondary and post-secondary levels. The ratio of girls to boys in primary school is very high — at around 97 per cent — while at the secondary and tertiary levels, girls dominate, with a ratio of over 100 per cent. Boys and girls are offered the same curriculum in co-educational settings.

87. There have been ongoing efforts to address gender disparity, for example, by removing gender stereotypes from the school curriculum and school textbooks. Yet, notwithstanding the above advances, new areas of gender disparity have emerged that require immediate attention. The performance of boys is found to be lagging behind that of girls at all levels and boys at the primary school level are found to have lower reading skills than girls. This has resulted in a larger proportion of boys among repeaters and in the pre-vocational classes. The problem that has to be addressed is whether these figures indeed show a gender disparity or whether it is a system disparity caused by an educational process dictated by competition during the early formative primary school years where girls are known to have a higher cognitive development.

88. It is pertinent to remain alert on the issue so as to address the fundamental issue of equity. The Education and Human Resource Strategy Plan 2008-2010 recommends that an education sector gender policy consistent with the principles and operational strategies of the National Gender Policy Framework be developed in order to ensure that equal opportunities are given to both sexes, with a view to achieving gender equality in learning achievement.

## VII. Other Education for All goals

89. The final section of the present report will broadly examine goals 3, 4 and 6 of the Education for All initiative and indicate actions taken to attain them.

### **Goal 3: Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes**

90. Education is compulsory for ages 5 to 16. Learning and life skills are offered as formal programmes. Provision is equally made for those pupils who have not succeeded in their primary schooling and who are thereby not eligible for secondary schooling. A three-year pre-vocational education stream has been created in secondary schools alongside secondary mainstream education to provide an alternative general education to these children. They can subsequently join the vocational stream after having followed a foundation course.

91. Policies also focus on broadening the opportunities of young people who missed out on education in their early years. Through a “Second Chance” programme, all young people under 21, who are not in full-time education or full-time employment are provided basic numeracy and language skills and oriented to a vocational programme so as to develop their skills for the start of a sustainable livelihood.

### **Goal 4: Achieving a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults**

92. The adult literacy rate for the age population of ages 15 and above stands at 84.3 per cent (census 2000 figures) and is slightly lower among females (80.5 per cent) as opposed to males (88.2 per cent).

93. Life skills programmes, basic and continuing education and literacy programmes are dispensed through non-formal institutions. This responsibility does not fall solely under the mandate of the Ministry of Education but rather is spread among several ministries, non-formal institutions and non-governmental organizations. Such programmes include the following:

(a) Core skill training programmes designed to include basic core skills, including literacy and numeracy among the lower grade workforce, so as to make them more employable and able to adjust easily to the changing economic environment;

(b) Training for retrenched workers, especially females, under the Empowerment Programme;

(c) On-the-job training to meet the challenges of the changing work environment.

### **Goal 6: Improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills**

94. The curriculum is an important element that has been given due consideration since it provides the tools to facilitate the development of a more inclusive system.

A renewal of the curriculum has accordingly been embarked upon at the pre-primary, primary and secondary levels. Built into the new curriculum is a holistic system of assessment to ensure that learning outcomes are met.

95. While efforts are made at the pre-primary level to standardize teaching and learning and to adopt the best practices that will be most suited to the overall development of the child, an assessment tool is being developed to ensure readiness of the children for primary education.

96. Assessment is also integrated into the new competence-based primary school curriculum, as follows:

(a) The baseline profiling at the start of primary schooling gives an indication of the learner's acquisition of skills and competencies at the end of the preschool cycle and aims at addressing learning deficits so that all children start on the same footing;

(b) A diagnostic assessment implemented at grade 3 aims at mapping the weaknesses and strengths of pupils after two years of primary schooling for early remediation;

(c) The Remedial Education Strategy provides the intervention measures for improvement in attainment level. The strategy looks at a wider range of considerations besides the cognitive; it targets the physical, social, psychological and mental development of the learner;

(d) The Continuous Assessment Scheme, with its merits of regularity, feedback and performance-based tasks, will make students become better learners, develop self-confidence and perform autonomously.

97. Besides school-based assessments, the country also takes part in regional and international assessment studies, which help both to provide a skill profile of learners and to serve as a means of measuring national progress against international benchmarks.

### **Challenges**

98. The challenges to these initiatives remain the setting up of a dedicated evaluation unit anchored within the Ministry of Education as an umbrella unit to better coordinate the monitoring and evaluation of the above-named interventions. Integrating the element of accountability throughout the whole school system that demands achievement in return for investment has yet to be put in place.

## **VIII. Conclusion**

99. It is an undisputable fact that national education policies will continue to be shaped by global forces, dictated by the economic imperative. Success in this increasingly competitive and globalized environment depends on the level of skills and knowledge of the workforce. This demands that Mauritius maintain a high level of investment in human capital, which is not an option, but a necessity. The performance of the education system has today to be measured in terms of outcomes and international benchmarking, all set within a competitive framework. At the same time, the national education system of Mauritius will be measured by the extent to which it assists the most vulnerable individuals, where learning achievement is

independent of whether learners have a socio-economic disadvantage or special education needs. The State is thus called upon to balance policies that subscribe to increased competitiveness and social justice.

---